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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to help youth services specialists in libraries in Texas customize their Reading Club efforts for their communities. A successful reading club requires careful thought, extensive planning, and willing and eager participants. Attracting and engaging these participants is of primary importance, as is the reason for the marketing approach outlined in this manual. Marketing is a systematic and customer-focused approach to business and achieving desired change relations with other groups. In beginning a Reading Club one must ask what is to be exchanged--what value are the customers giving and what value are they receiving? The library offers reading materials and activities in exchange for the child's time and effort. Defining service areas and knowing the audience are vital. Target groups can be defined by age, school, interest, or any appropriate criteria. Registration, record keeping, and rewards are key to program implementation. Promotion must take place in house, in person, and in the media. Strategies must be developed to solicit support. Evaluation is an essential part of program planning, and the basis of new marketing research. Appendixes include a reading club report card, an evaluation survey, and a list of reading club themes through 1995. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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Marketing the Texas Reading Club

A Guide for Youth Services Specialists

Viki Ash-Geisler

Library Development Division
Texas State Library
1993

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A note to my colleagues...

The Texas State Library has been involved with Reading Club activities since 1958. The earliest statewide efforts were demonstration projects featuring special programs for children and teenagers designed to encourage reading for pleasure. Since 1975, the State Library has provided theme related materials to libraries across Texas to help make local Reading Clubs colorful, appealing, and successful. Materials from the State Library have continued to promote the pleasure of reading while emphasizing a flexibility of design that has allowed for a tremendous amount of freedom in implementation. Local libraries and librarians have responded to this freedom with tremendous energy and creativity.

The purpose of this manual is neither to restrict your flexibility nor limit your freedom. This manual is not a compilation of checklists and surefire recipes for success. Rather, it is an attempt to expand your thinking, to maximize your intellectual input and creative response. The marketing focus outlined in this manual will help you customize the Reading Club for your community while keeping the children you serve the focal point of your efforts.

I wish you a successful Reading Club, this and every year. I wish the children you serve, *your customers*, a lifetime of reading pleasure. I know you will extend every effort to make this year's Reading Club the beginning of that pleasure. My confidence in you is exceeded only by my willingness to applaud your success!

Viki Ash-Geisler

P.S. For those of you whose curiosities have been piqued, a list of Reading Club themes, 1975-1995, can be found in Appendix D.

Table of Contents

One..... What is marketing?..... 1

Two..... Who are your Reading Club customers?..... 7

Three..... What programs and services will your Reading Club offer? 13

Four..... How will you promote the Texas Reading Club?..... 21

Five..... How will you solicit the support of your library administration and staff? 27

Six..... How will you evaluate your Reading Club and your marketing efforts? 33

Appendices..... 39

Bibliography..... 49

What is Marketing?

The Texas Reading Club is a vehicle of tremendous power. It is a program that allows children to have fun, to enhance their knowledge, to hone their skills, and most importantly, to feel successful. It is also an opportunity for the children's department of your library to shine -- in the eyes of customers, library administrators, and government officials.

A successful Reading Club, one that maximizes this potential and power, requires careful thought, extensive planning, and of course, willing and eager participants. These participants, are in fact, the most crucial component, the most important feature of the Reading Club. Without them, there is no Reading Club.

It follows quite logically then, that attracting and actively engaging Reading Club participants is of primary importance. This is where marketing begins -- with the Reading Club participant, or more generically, with the customer.

Marketing is a systematic and customer-focused approach to doing business that includes analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Elam & Paley, 1992). The central concept in the marketing approach is exchange. The customer exchanges something of value for something else of value. Generally, this exchange is considered in the commercial sector and defined in terms of money for goods and services.

> "Marketing is a systematic approach to planning and achieving desired exchange relations with other groups. Marketing is concerned with developing, maintaining, and/or regulating exchange relations involving products, services, organizations, persons, places or causes."
>
> (Kotler, 1975. p. 13)

Philip Kotler (1975) defines the professional marketer as "someone who is very good at understanding, planning and managing exchanges" (p. 5). Im-

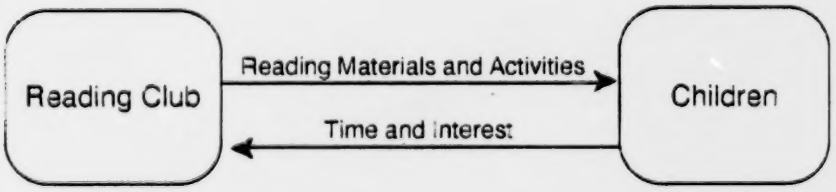
plicit in this definition are the concepts that the marketer will research and articulate the needs of his/her customer, offer a product or service that meets those needs, communicate the offering effectively, and present the offering at an appropriate time and place.

Careful consideration of this concept of exchange will quickly lead you to the conclusion that a successful marketing strategy is dependent upon the ability to provide "want-satisfying products and services" (Elam & Paley, 1992, p. 7). The goods and services your customers want are the ones you should be providing. While this may sound obvious, the task of knowing your customer is not easily undertaken nor quickly accomplished.

In order to determine what your customers want, it is first necessary to determine who they are. Kotler (1975) suggests that successful marketing involves the selection of target groups and *warns against attempts to win every customer and be all things to all people.*

Customers vary in countless ways. To treat all customers the same ignores their innate diversity and decreases the possibility of adequately meeting anyone's needs. Conversely, treating each customer as an individual, and offering each a personally designed product or service is both impractical and expensive. For the marketer, the answer lies in the middle ground. Through the use of segmentation, the marketer defines and targets specific groups whose needs are similar and for whom a want-satisfying product can be developed and exchanged (Kotler & Andreasen, 1991).

When considering the Reading Club from a marketing perspective, you begin with one central question. What are you exchanging? What value are your customers giving and what value are they receiving?

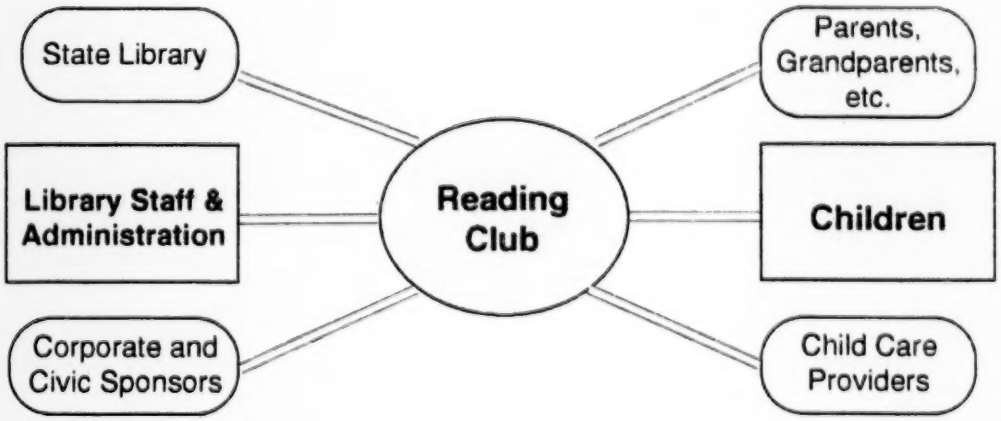


You are offering reading materials and reading activities in exchange for a child's time and effort. You might picture this exchange as a simple two-way street.

You will quickly recognize however, that while such a depiction is helpful, it is too simplistic. First of all, the children who participate in the Reading Club are not all the same. They differ by age, by interest, by proximity to your library location, and by a multitude of other characteristics.

Additionally, children are not your only customers. Reading Club success depends on the support of parents and other care providers who bring children to the library and encourage participation. Also, you no doubt will maintain that the Reading Club offers more than just books and activities. Customers are, hopefully, receiving in the exchange some level of enjoyment, intellectual and emotional stimulation, positive feedback, and personal satisfaction. These items are less concrete and harder to guarantee, yet they may have considerable exchange value to parents and other caregivers as well as to children.

When reconstructing the model, it is also important to consider what is happening to the left of the box marked Reading Club. Who provides support for the Reading Club? What value is that party receiving in exchange for such support? Most likely, primary support comes from your local library institution. You may also receive support from a corporate sponsor, a library friends group, and/or other civic organizations. And of course, the Texas State Library also has a place in your model.



Now what seemed like a simple two-way street looks more like a major intersection where multiple and complex exchanges occur.

But even this model is inaccurate, because it doesn't account for the unique nature of your library, your Reading Club, and your customers.

Take some time to consider, and even sketch out, who is involved in your Reading Club. Who are your customers? Who are your supporters? What are you exchanging with each of them? If your model is too simple--keep thinking! You may be able to come up with rich and varied ways to segment your customer groups and expand your exchange offerings thus increasing the impact of your Reading Club. If your model is too complex--you still need to keep thinking! You may be able to find ways to cluster your customer groups and streamline your exchange offerings while maintaining your Reading Club's power and popularity.

Another important concept in the marketing approach is the *marketing mix.* This phrase is used to indicate the aspects of the marketing exchange that can be adjusted to better meet customer needs and to increase chances of success. In the private sector, the elements of the marketing mix are product design, product pricing, communication, and distribution. Kotler (1975) refers to these elements as the "Four P's: product, price, place and promotion" (p. 163). Companies with similar products or services to offer compete, often times quite aggressively, by altering their designs and adjusting their prices. Additionally, they spend great amounts of time and money developing a wide variety of advertising strategies to inform customers of their offerings and to let them know where and when products can be acquired.

At first glance, you may think that the library in general, and the Reading Club more specifically, are really only interested in one of the 4 P's: *promotion.* Certainly, some libraries do emphasize promotion in their approach to the marketing mix. These libraries are erroneously assuming that the product, price, and place are set and somewhat static.

Consider again, the main *product* of the Reading Club: reading materials, reading activities and reading enjoyment. As long as you keep reading in that mix, you have tremendous opportunities for variation that will reflect the needs of your customers.

Place may also seem to be a variable difficult to manipulate. Certainly that is true if you think of the Reading Club as synonymous with the library

building. However, it is more than likely that you can find ways to take the Reading Club out into the community. If you make school visits, make trips to day care centers, or provide a library presence in local activities you are extending the place where library/customer exchanges can happen.

Additionally, the manner in which you present the children's department has an impact on your customer's perception of place. If the children's area is attractive and inviting that perception can be very positive. You may want to think of the children's area as special place within the library environment. Ideally, it is a place where you display your regard for your customers by providing a colorful and child-centered physical setting; a place to come for warm and friendly person-to-person interactions.

The Effective Reading Club Manager...

1. Knows who his/her Reading Club customers are.
2. Understands and articulates the needs of those customers.
3. Develops Reading Club rules, regulations and programs to meet those needs.
4. Effectively communicates Reading Club activities to customers and potential customers.
5. Provides Reading Club activities at times suited to customer need.
6. Evaluates all aspects of the Reading Club with the intent of better meeting customer needs in the future.

Adapted from Kotler, 1975.

Adjusting the last of the 4 P's, price, will be the most challenging. Ideally, no money will change hands in relation to the Reading Club. While there may be a limited number of overdue fines and lost book charges, for the most part, Reading Club participants will avail themselves of your services free of charge. *This is not to say that no cost is involved.* Your customers will be expending considerable time and effort. While you may be able to minimize that time and effort, you will want to maximize the benefits the children receive. Maximizing the pleasure, the incidental learning, and the positive feedback available through the Reading Club will go a long way toward decreasing the *price* of the exchange in the minds of your customers.

The importance placed on the various elements of the *marketing mix* results in various levels of marketing intensity (Kotler, 1975). The aggressive marketing campaign emphasizes the promotion. Traditionally, the aggressive marketer has a product in continuous production and selling is the primary concern.

Minimal marketing is practiced by organizations that pay only limited attention to customer research, assuming that "demand will grow for their product simply because they are offering it, or offering it well" (Kotler, 1975, p. 8). Minimal marketing relies heavily on the product element of the marketing mix.

Balanced marketing, the most desirable and most appropriate approach for purposes of the Reading Club, "seeks to blend effectively all the elements of the marketing mix" in a way that will contribute to increased participation and high customer satisfaction (Kotler, 1975, p. 9).

Before moving away from the theoretic aspects of marketing and on to more practical applications, take a moment to think about these questions:

★ ★ What do you hope to achieve during this year's Reading Club?

★ ★ Do you want the needs and desires of children to be the driving force of this year's Reading Club programs?

★ ★ Are you ready to re-adjust your thinking and become not only a children's librarian and a Reading Club manager, but also a marketer?

Who are the Reading Club Customers ?

As you have noted, the Reading Club program sets up exchange relationships with several different client groups. However, the primary customers from among these groups are most assuredly the children. While it may be obvious that you will not reach all the children who are out there, it is important to try and determine just who all of them are.

In 1992, the American Library Association published Output Measures for Public Library Service to Children. Written by Virginia A. Walter as part of the Public Library Development Program, the manual suggests standardized procedures for measuring and reporting children's services statistics. What is noteworthy about the manual, and of particular interest from a marketing perspective, is Walter's suggestion that children's statistics be reported in *relative* terms: circulation of children's materials per child, library visits per child, school/library contacts per school, etc. Reporting statistics in this manner provides library administrators and other governing officials with concrete. understandable, and significant information (Walter, 1992).

This concept can easily and appropriately be applied to the Reading Club. What percentage of the children available participated in the Club? What percentage completed the Club requirements?

In order to answer these question, you will first have to determine your library's service area. Walter (1992) refers to this as the *legal service area* and defines it as "the geographical area for which a public library has been established to offer services and from which (or on behalf of which) the library derives income" (p. 24). The service area may be an entire city, town or county or it may consist of parts of one or more of these. If your library has only one service point, a main library, then defining your service area will not be too difficult. If however, you are part of a multi-branched system the task becomes more complex. In such cases, the children's services pro-

viders from the various locations, in conjunction with administrative personnel, will need to work together to define service areas.

Acknowledging that the process is difficult in multiple outlet library systems, Walter suggests several strategies for determining legal service areas and their corresponding children's populations (25). While service areas defined by census tract will be the most precise, it will take considerable time and effort to realize such divisions. You might consider defining service areas by zip code zones. Such zones are more easily identified than census tracts and zoned maps, as well as the actual zip codes assigned to schools, day care providers, etc., are increasingly available in telephone directories. Additionally, your library will most likely have zip code information in its patron database.

After defining your legal service area, you will also have to determine the children's population of that area. This may be an even more difficult task requiring considerable coordination and creativity. Walter (1992) suggests working with a "combination of school enrollment figures and census data" but warns that "the method used for calculating the children's population [be] consistent for each branch of the service area" (p. 25).

You may well be thinking that all this is too confusing, too complex, and ultimately too inaccurate to pursue further. Don't despair! Realizing that the best you can do is estimate the children's population of your service area, do your best and move on.

To give you a concrete example, and hopefully some inspiration, consider the 1990 Reading Club from a statewide perspective. Approximately 488,000 children participated in the club that year. Census figures for 1990 reported just over 4 million children in Texas aged 14 and under. This means that 12% of the state's children participated in the Reading Club. If the population figure is adjusted to more accurately reflect the Reading Club's target audience and only the 2 million children between 5 and 12 are considered, the participation figure increases to 24%. Surely even the most cynical public official would be able to appreciate such a success ratio!

In her 1988 dissertation on the Effectiveness of Summer Reading Programs in Public Libraries in the United States, Jill Locke suggests that engaging 8% or more of the children in the service area's population in the Reading

Club constitutes an effective and successful program. She further indicates that for the 200 libraries in her study, the average rate of participation was 5% (Locke, 1988). These figures will give you some basis for comparison as you consider the participation rate for your Reading Club.

In conjunction with estimating the children's population of your service area, you need to identify the schools, day care centers and other agencies located in the area. These organizations will be useful to you as you begin to publicize the Reading Club.

Past experience, or perhaps just common sense, may inform you that you will not be able to serve all the schools, day care centers, etc., in your area. However, it is important to be aware of all the potential participating groups. This will help you to identify audiences that you are serving adequately, as well as those you might be neglecting or excluding unintentionally.

The schools in your area will no doubt be easy to identify. Between the telephone directory and the school district office you should be able to compile a list of names, addresses, and enrollment figures.

Day care providers are more difficult, but not impossible to identify. Again, the telephone directory is a good place to begin. However, the information in the phone books may be out of date and/or incomplete. The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS) is the state agency responsible for regulating and licensing day care providers. TDPRS identifies and regulates three different types

To Know Your Reading Club Customers...

1. Define the legal service area of your library.
2. Estimate the children's population of the service area.
3. Identify the schools, both public and private, in the service area.
4. Identify the day care providers as well as any other agencies or organizations concerned with children in the service area.
5. Determine which of the schools, day care centers and other agencies you intend to target for Reading Club participation.

of day care facilities: day care centers, group day care homes, and registered family homes. Day care centers are authorized to care for the largest number of children per facility and are most likely to be found in the Yellow Pages.

For a complete and timely listing of all the licensed child care providers in you service area, you should contact the TDPRS office nearest you. These offices maintain lists of licensed care providers, arranged by zip code, that are updated quarterly. Many towns have a local TDPRS office than can be located via the phone book. If you are unable to locate a local office, contact one of the larger regional offices to ask for assistance.

Central Texas Area
P.O. Box 15995
Austin, TX 78761
(512) 834-0162

West Texas Area
P.O. Box 10276
El Paso, TX 79994
(915) 521-4343

Dallas/Fort Worth Area
111 W. Ledbett
Dallas, TX 75224
(214) 302-4216

Houston Area
P.O. Box 16017
Houston, TX 77222
(713) 696-7241

Panhandle Area
P.O. Box 3700
Amarillo, TX 79116
(806) 356-3123

South Texas Area
P.O. Box 23990
San Antonio, TX
(210) 257-8111

After you have defined your service area, estimated its children's population and identified its schools, day care providers and other child related agencies, it is time to identify target groups for Reading Club participation.

As public institutions, libraries have traditionally attempted to serve everyone. While this is appropriate, it has not proven to be particularly successful or entirely realistic. Public relations consultant, Charles Leonard suggests that librarians in pursuing patrons, might take a lesson from the political strategist. "It is senseless for a liberal Democrat to spend a lot of time campaigning in an ultra-conservative Republican neighborhood. [The candidate] may ultimately win or carry that area -- that happens. But it is much more practical to spend one's time, money and efforts in two other areas -- the neighborhood more favorable to you and in what is called a *swing* area in politics. For our purposes, we can translate the word swing to *possible user*" (Leonard, 1985, p. 8).

Taking Leonard's cue, you might want to consider as your primary Reading Club target audiences, those children who are or have been library users as well as those who you think you have a definite chance of *winning over.* You will be the best judge of who your *swing* groups are. Perhaps they are the children in schools close enough to your library to allow for walking or biking to Reading Club programs. Perhaps they are the child care centers who promote the educational aspects of their programs.

Establishing target audiences does not mean you will ignore certain sections of your population. You will continue to provide information about the Reading Club program to any and everyone who will listen. Establishing target groups is simply a way of acknowledging that the time and effort you have to expend are finite and therefore you want to make the most of them. For example, you may have time to visit a limited number of schools to promote the Reading Club. You set aside all the time you can and begin to accept invitations and make appointments. Before you realize it, all your time has been appropriated by schools whose past participation has been minimal at best.

If however, early in the Reading Club planning process, you had determined which schools are most likely to contain your *swing* group, you could have targeted those schools and arranged for well timed and meaningful visits. The result will be increased participation from students in those schools due to your efforts.

Target Groups

As a librarian, a manager, and a marketer, you have limited time and resources to expend on the Reading Club. Consequently, you have to make choices as you are planning, implementing, and evaluating the Reading Club. Establishing target groups is one such choice.

The target group is a subset within the population of your service area. The group can be defined by age, by school, by interest, or by any other criteria you find relevant.

Your purpose in identifying such a group is to *aim* your Reading Club at that target; to adjust the *marketing mix* (product, price, promotion, place) to fit the needs of that group; and to maximize their willingness to engage in the Reading Club exchange.

★ Targeting is not an exclusionary tactic, only an expedient one.

It will certainly be appropriate to establish multiple target groups. If your Reading Club plans include a read-to-me component as well as one for independent readers, you have already made a preliminary decision to target two groups that you define based on age and ability. While the Reading Club product may be quite similar for these two groups (Reading Logs, an incentive game, and ultimately the certificate), how you engage members of each group in the Reading Club will be quite different. Establishing target groups and being aware of their various needs and interests can save you time, effort, and frustration as you plan and implement the Reading Club.

What Programs and Services Will Your Reading Club Offer?

Planning the Reading Club is, from the marketing perspective, the *product development* phase of the undertaking. You want to design Reading Club programs that will fulfill your customers needs and desires. You want to offer services of sufficient value that your customers will be willing to enter into an exchange with the library.

Ideally then, you would undertake extensive research to find out what your customers want and value -- developing a random sample of both previous and potential customers; designing, testing, and administering a survey instrument that will yield useful data; analyzing with great care the results of the study, and finally, planning the Reading Club with those results in mind.

While such an endeavor might be ideal, it probably is not feasible in most situations. The time, personnel, and financial resources required for such research are seldom available to the library as a whole and even more rarely at the disposal of the children's department.

So what is the children's librarian/marketer to do? First, do not despair! You already know a great deal about your customers. You work with them, talk with them, share books and programs with them virtually every day. Take time to reflect on what you know. Which *target audiences* have participated in the Reading Club in the past? What programs have you offered that have been successful? What programs can you think of that would be fun for you as a presenter? *Do not underestimate the power of your own enthusiasm to positively effect your customers.* As you ask yourself these types of questions, ask your customers, the children who visit the library and join the Reading Club, as well. Let them know that you are developing plans for the upcoming Reading Club and that their input is meaningful to you.

It is also important to bear in mind that your knowledge of your customers will increase over time. This is due in part to an ever increasing experience base upon which you can draw. Just as important however, will be your increasing willingness and ability to engage Reading Club customers in the evaluation of your efforts. You may, as you plan this year's Reading Club, be unable to formally survey your customers. However, the close of this year's club will provide you with a rich source of information if you choose to utilize it. (More about evaluation and customer surveys can be found in Chapter Six and in Appendices B and C.)

Goals and Objectives

As you are thinking about this year's Reading Club and talking to your customers, it is essential to keep one important question in mind: What do you hope to accomplish through the Reading Club?

There are a variety of answers that instantly come to mind.

- ★ You may want to increase the circulation of children's books.
- ★ You may want to increase the number children participating and/or completing the club requirements.
- ★ You may want to increase the number of children attending library programs.

All of these answers, and a variety of others, are perfectly correct and even commendable. They can lead you to identifiable and measurable objectives. They will assist you as you begin to plan the Reading Club and again as you evaluate it.

However, to develop an over-arching goal for the Reading Club, you must ask another and more difficult question: Why? Why do you want increases in circulation, attendance, and participation? Why are you

THINK
As You Plan!

Why are you having a Reading Club? *Answering this question will provide you with Reading Club goals.*

What do you want to happen? *Answering this question will provide you with Reading Club objectives.*

How are you going to make it happen? *Answering this question will provide you with Reading Club programs and activities.*

willing to devote so much time and effort to the Reading Club endeavor? While considering and ultimately articulating a Reading Club goal will take considerable thought and a large dose of philosophic introspection, the pay-off will be well worth the effort. Questions that arise during subsequent planning, and even during the course of the Reading Club itself, can be more easily answered in light of this carefully considered goal. Neglecting to develop such a goal statement can result in a disjointed and confusing Reading Club for you, your customers, and your co-workers.

At this point, you may be hoping for a nice, neat version of the perfect Reading Club goal. SORRY! No such statement will be forthcoming. In fact, no such statement is possible. *It is your library, they are your customers, and the Reading Club goal needs to reflect the unique qualities of both.* The only advice available is to keep your customers at the center of your Reading Club and the focus of your goal. To receive a larger percentage of next year's book and personnel budgets because of increased juvenile circulation and program attendance may be delightful side effects of a successful Reading Club, but as goals, such budgetary benefits are somewhat self-serving. To aim for increased circulation and program attendance as means for enhancing and expanding children's knowledge of literature reflect a more customer-centered focus. Similarly, to plan for increases in Reading Club participation and completion just because it will look good in an annual report is not as customer-oriented as working for those same increases because of a commitment to the educational benefits children can reap from self-directed, self-selected reading.

Committing your Reading Club efforts to a philosophic, and quite possibly idealistic goal, does not mean that the undertaking is so serious as to be devoid of fun! In fact, if you hope to engage children's interest and enthusiasm, fun is a key element. The programs and activities you develop will be the enjoyable means of meeting your objectives and attaining your goals.

The Three R's: Registration, Record Keeping, and Rewards

A key concern and practical consideration you will have to address early in the planning process is exactly how the Reading Club will be structured. When will it start? How long will it last? How will you register membership? How will you ask participants to keep track of their reading? And how

will you reward or recognize them? Once again, these are question that cannot be answered for you. They are best considered in relation to the unique characteristics of your customers and your library.

★ During registration you collect information regarding Reading Club participants that is beyond what they report on individual reading logs. This is perhaps the least difficult of the 3 R's to consider. In determining how you will proceed you must first consider what information you will need to determine if the Reading Club is successful. You will also need to consider what information the State Library may ask you to report at the close of the Club. At the very minimum, you will want to know how many children make the initial effort to participate. If you are particularly interested in targeting the students in the primary grades at the schools closest to the library, then as registration takes place you will also want to ascertain the grade level and school of the participants. If you are interested in comparing the number of preschool participants to the overall number of preschoolers in your service area, requiring an age on the registration form/list will be important. *The point is to ask for information at the time of registration that will be useful to you and conversely, not to muddle the process asking for information you won't really use.* For example, it is unreasonable to ask children to provide you with their addresses and phone numbers if you don't anticipate you'll be calling or writing them.

If your only intent is to count the number of Reading Club participants, a simple running list will suffice for registration. If you intend to sort the data you collect (by school, grade, age, etc.) or if you plan to maintain reading records in addition to those found on the reading logs, a registration file kept on index cards may be more useful. If time and equipment are available, computer assisted registration can ease later efforts at data analysis and report generation. Regardless of whether you use a list, a card file, or an electronic file, ask for all the information you need and nothing more!

★ ★ Record keeping, the second of the 3 R's, is a more complicated consideration. In addition to deciding whether to keep the reading logs at the library or to send them home with the children, you will also have to determine what should be counted. Traditionally, Reading Club participants are asked to record book titles. Individual goals regarding the number of books to be read and recorded could be set, or a more general goal might be

designated. This method of record keeping places the emphasis on the book itself and may facilitate an awareness and interest in particular authors or genres of literature. It has the added advantage of providing the librarian with an identifiable starting point to engage the reader in friendly book discussion. There are disadvantages of recording book titles to consider as well. The beginning or struggling reader may be unable to envision him/herself ever actually reading an entire book, let alone a goal number of ten! Additionally, emphasis on book titles may encourage children to read books well below their level of interest and ability in order to quickly fulfill completion requirements. Such efforts may place an unwarranted emphasis on quantity. Such a tendency might be countered in part, by giving *extra credit* for longer books. A book of 200 pages might count as two titles rather than one.

As an alternative, some libraries encourage children to record the number of minutes they engage in reading. This provides the child who exerts considerable time with a challenging book a more equitable sense of recognition for his/her efforts. But again, this method of record keeping has its drawbacks. The easy opportunity to engage in focused book discussion is lost. It is hard to translate a *clock log* into a meaningful, language-rich, shared experience! Additionally, counting minutes will not guarantee a diminishing emphasis on quantity, only a shift in the effort from reading the most titles to reading the most minutes.

Some libraries have attempted to join the best of both worlds, offering Reading Club participants a choice of counting titles or minutes. The question of what to record is quickly joined with the question of how much is enough? Ten books? Five hours? Again, this is a question you will have to answer at the local level. Keep in mind that the number of weeks you will be engaging in Reading Club activities will impact the decision. A ten week Reading Club with a 15 book requirement might seem acceptable; that's a book and a half a week. Similarly, a six week club that encourages children to read 20 minutes a day, would require a total of 14 hours to complete. You will want to establish a requirement that is reasonable, logical, and attainable.

Regardless of what you decide to record and what requirements you set, it is important to identify and articulate the *rules* before the Reading Club begins. Keep them simple and easy to understand. You DO NOT want to spend your time acting as the *library police*. You DO want to maximize the

positive feelings your customers develop about the library. You DO NOT want to deny readers the credit they feel they deserve. You DO want to enhance self-esteem and foster a sense of accomplishment. You DO NOT want any book discussion you engage in with children to feel like a test. You DO want to base your interactions with children on a bond of trust and respect. So, consider carefully what you will have your customers record and how you will respond to their efforts.

★ ★ ★ The final, and most controversial of the 3 R's is the question of rewards or incentives. Reading Club certificates are provided by the State Library to acknowledge those readers who complete whatever requirements you might set. In addition to these certificates, a wide variety of other incentives and rewards are often offered to readers as they proceed through levels of Reading Club involvement. These may range from a simple token of recognition on the library bulletin board, to t-shirt transfers, magnets, buttons, hats and bandanas, to opportunities to enter drawings for prizes of considerable financial value.

As with goals, objectives, registration, and record keeping decisions about rewards/incentives are best considered at the local level. From a marketing perspective, the use of rewards/incentives can become a factor in the exchange that takes place between the library and the Reading Club participant. As you consider how to respond to the question of rewards and incentives, think carefully about their place in the exchange. Does the prize add value to your exchange without diminishing or competing with the overarching goal? In other words, is the value so great that participants see joining the Reading Club as a means to the reward rather than an enjoyable/valuable experience with a pleasant side benefit? Also consider whether the reward/incentive encourages a competitive emphasis on quantity of reading rather than quality.

Particularly in the case of coupons and discounts that local businesses may offer you for use as incentives, it is important to consider just who is benefiting from the arrangement. If the local fast food chain is using the library as a vehicle for free advertising without providing any meaningful reciprocal benefits, the value of the exchange must be questioned.

This is not to say that incentives and prizes are to be avoided. But, like the development of goals, objectives, registration procedures, and record

keeping, decisions regarding rewards should be undertaken thoughtfully and at the local level.

Programs and Activities

Programs and activities are additional aspects of the Reading Club *product* you will need to plan with care. Generally, programs can be considered by audience age level, by type of activity, or both. Read-aloud session can be tailored for audiences of toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, and even young adults. A similar statement could be made for film programs and craft programs as well. The annual Reading Club manual will provide you with lots of ideas and suggestions for theme appropriate programming in all these categories.

The important thing to consider as you plan for programming is your Reading Club goal. If your intent is to provide quality literary experiences for school-age children, then an emphasis on crafts will be misplaced. If however, your aim is to assist children in making a connection between books and creative endeavors, emphasizing craft programs is certainly appropriate. More than likely, your goals and your program offerings will be multifaceted. This will allow for the diversity of needs/desires your customers exhibit and the utilization of the various materials and resources available to you. The question to always keep in mind as you plan programs is: Will this program move the Reading Club and its participants toward the desired end? A program that engages your customers and responds to Reading Club goals and objectives is a program worthy of time and effort.

A consideration of additional concern is the timing of your program offerings. Plan programs at times when customers can attend. You may need to take into account other activities offered for children in your service area. If the local swimming pool is a major attraction for a group of potential customers, but is closed to the public in the mornings, you will want to factor that in as you plan programs. Similarly, you will want to avoid the hours just after lunch for preschool programming. Those same hours however, may be perfectly suited for programs designed for an older audience.

Developing a program schedule with an easily identifiable pattern will assist your customers in remembering when to come and your co-workers in

describing what will take place. For example: Monday and Wednesday morning programs for preschoolers, Tuesday and Thursday afternoon programs for school age children, with Saturdays at noon set aside for family activities, is a schedule that is logical, repetitive and memorable.

Please bear in mind that such a schedule is an example not a recommendation! You will have to decide just how much programming you can handle. Just as you are encouraging your readers to emphasize quality over quantity, you will want to keep this same philosophy in mind as you develop your schedule. Your time, energy, and resources are finite. If two well-developed, meaningful programs a week are what you can do and do well, terrific! Place the emphasis on the quality of what happens rather than how often it happens.

Additionally, you will want to consider the location where programs will be offered. Will they always occur in the same room/space at the library? Are there any other locations within the library you might want to utilize? How about locations outside the library? Will special arrangements need to be made to reserve space? Even within your own facility you may need to get Reading Club activities on the meeting room calendar well in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts.

As you have certainly surmised, either from this text or from personal experience, planning a Reading Club is not a quick and easy undertaking. It cannot be accomplished in the two weeks just prior to the date registration begins. So, give yourself plenty of lead time. Undertake planning in a careful and thoughtful manner. And then, enjoy the Reading Club along with your customers!

How Will You Promote the Texas Reading Club?

A key factor in the success of the Reading Club will be your ability to *get the word* out regarding the programs and activities you will provide. Promotion is the fourth component of the 4 P's that comprise the marketing mix: Price, Product, Place, Promotion.

Promotion of the Reading Club can take place in three basic ways:

★ in house ★ in person ★ in the media

Full scale promotional efforts include strategies for each of these.

In House Promotion

Noted marketing consultant Charles Leonard maintains that "the best time to reach a user or prospective user is similar to the best time to sell a home owner a vacuum cleaner or a washer-dryer combination. When they are in need or in the mood to purchase. Therefore, most of our [promotion] of the library can be done within the confines of the library. Why? Because people are already there. They are in a *library mood*" (Leonard, 1985, p. 13-14). According to Leonard, in-house promotion is one of the most powerful and under-utilized tools at your disposal.

In-house promotion might be defined as any publicity pieces that are either displayed or distributed at the library. In-house promotion could include bulletin boards, posters, exhibits/displays, brochures, bookmarks, bibliographies and/or flyers.

If you are fortunate enough to have a graphic artist on your library staff, take full advantage of his/her knowledge and expertise. This is a co-worker who can play a major role in the success of the Reading Club.

While the services of a graphic artist can be a definite asset, the libraries that employ such personnel are few and far between. It is likely that you will have to act as your own designer for in house promotion. Like so many other aspects of the Reading Club, this is an area that will take some careful thought and planning.

In-house promotional displays and publications have both informational and aesthetic aspects that must be considered. Your intent is to publicize the Reading Club in an attractive and appealing manner.

Keep in mind as you consider the aesthetics of promotion that your knowledge of design and layout may be greater than you think. As a reader and a librarian, you have absorbed a wide variety of design elements through your experience with books. Additionally, as a member of our consumer-centered society, you have been on the receiving end of countless promotional campaigns. As you design bulletin boards, bookmarks and brochures, keep these experiences in mind. Your aim is to package and to present Reading Club information. Designing promotional pieces can be a satisfying and creative undertaking.

Design Features to Consider in Library Publications

Graphics can be used to add interest and visual appeal. Illustrations as well as symbols and lines are graphic elements used in publication layout. The clip art provided in each year's Reading Club manual is a good source for theme-related graphics.

Headlines are a means of drawing attention to specific sections of a publication. They assist the reader in identifying key concepts/information. Like graphics, headlines can add to the visual appeal of a publication.

Text is the explanatory information provided in the publication. The amount of text will vary, but as a general rule, promotional pieces should avoid long and densely packed text.

White space is the area in a publication reserved for resting the eye and separating other design features. It is tied to the *less is more* concept and can enhance the reader's ability to process the informational intent of the publication.

Clip Art: Copyright-free, camera ready graphics and headlines designed to add aesthetic interest and appeal to library publications. Clip art can be incorporated into your publicity efforts through the ever popular *cut and paste* method.

The system office for your region can provide you with additional clip art resources.

The graphic illustration used in this manual is from ALA's 1983 Library Clip Art.

At your local bookstore, you may find a variety of inexpensive clip art books produced by Dover and several other publishers.

In terms of content, it is important to include all pertinent information -- explaining what is happening, when, where, and for whom. As you compose the information for a promotional piece, keep the intended audience in mind. A flyer for parents and adult care providers of preschoolers would have a different slant than one promoting crafts to school aged children. It is particularly important with publications that are intended for distribution to include the library's name, location, and phone number. The customer who takes a brochure from the library may not be the only customer who utilizes the information. This basic information about the source of the brochure could be of key importance to the second and even third customer who accesses the piece.

One last bit of advice regarding promotional publications: PROOFREAD! The information you provide needs to be accurate as well as complete. Indicating that a film program will be held on Tuesday, June 6th when Tuesday is actually June 5th can cause confusion and cost you a customer's confidence. Typographical errors also reflect badly on you and on the library. Always have a co-worker do the final proofreading. Your ability to catch your own errors may be limited, but a fresh pair of eyes may quickly spot any problems. You may find that proofing is best accomplished from a photocopy of your final draft. In addition to providing the proofreader with a copy on which he/she can mark, the cleanliness of the copy often helps in the effort to locate mistakes.

The importance of proofreading cannot be over emphasized. It is a vital step in the process of producing promotional materials. You will feel much happier to have found and fixed that spelling error before 500 copies of a brochure are printed!

In Person Promotion

Any time you converse about the Reading Club you are engaged in promotion. Whether you are talking informally with a customer or co-worker or making a planned presentation before a group, you have the opportunity to positively promote the Reading Club.

Leonard suggests that personal promotion has the best chance of success when you interact with individuals or small groups, and when your message is short, clear, and directed. By directed he means one goal, one message, one product. "Don't sell the library. Sell its services; sell its features; sell its products - but one at a time" (Leonard, 1985, p. 14).

For example, consider a school visit. According to Leonard, you will be more effective in promoting the Reading Club if you visit individual classes. This is not to say you should reject offers to address school assemblies. Certainly a promotional presentation at an assembly is more effective than no presentation at all! But, keep in mind that potential customers can feel the *personal touch* to a greater extent when the group is small. Keep your presentation short and to the point. You want to promote the Reading Club, so talk about the Reading Club. If you want to include a story, make sure that it can be related to club themes or activities and be remembered as a library related occurrence, not just as an entertaining diversion as the school vacation approaches.

In addition to in person promotion through school visits, you can also consider visits to day care centers and appearances at organizational meetings such as the PTA, the Scouts, etc. Any place that Reading Club customers gather, whether those customers are children or adults, is a place to engage in promotion. You are limited only by time and inclination.

Promotion in the Media

Both broadcast and print media can be utilized to promote the Reading Club. Generally, media promotion takes place in the form of either press releases or public service announcements. There are some conventions to follow with each of the formats that may increase your rate of success in obtaining media coverage.

First, it is important to bear in mind that the media is not considered a public utility. Which is to say, that while you can expect the water department to respond quickly and effectively every time you turn on the tap, you cannot expect the local newspaper or television station to respond as positively to your need to promote the Reading Club. You must be sure that the items you submit to the media are news-worthy, are of interest to the media's target audience, and are received in a timely fashion, well in advance of the expected publication or broadcast date.

When writing and submitting press releases it is important to include all pertinent information. Answer the *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions in the opening paragraph. Use later paragraphs for explanations and the final paragraphs for miscellaneous or general information. This style is sometimes referred to as the *inverted pyramid.* The top of pyramid, the beginning of the story, is broad based, containing the essential elements of information. The bottom of the pyramid, the close of the story, narrows to contain less pertinent material. This style of writing allows the news editor to quickly shorten the story if there are space or time constraints.

When Writing News Releases

- ★ Use library/Reading Club letterhead. Double space the press release and use only one side of the paper.
- ★ Indicate your name and phone number as the person to contact for further information or clarification.
- ★ Include a date of release in the heading. This is the date the story should be published/broadcast.
- ★ Include a headline for the story that encapsulates the information found in the story.
- ★ Begin the text of the story with a lead sentence that piques interest.
- ★ Include complete, clear, and concise information.
- ★ If possible, limit the release to one page. If two pages are necessary, type the word **more** at the bottom of the first page. This alerts the editor that he/she should look for a second page.

Public service announcements (PSAs) are shorter and less formal than press releases. They are designed to be aired over a radio or television station. Generally, they are read by an announcer or on-air personality.

When Writing Public Service Announcements

- ★ Be brief. Limit copy to 50 to 75 words. PSAs of this length can be read in 20 to 30 seconds.
- ★ Be lively and imaginative. Use words that are descriptive, colorful, and indicate action.
- ★ Write in a style that is easy to read and to understand. Use short sentences that flow. Avoid tongue twisters.
- ★ Type the copy in all caps and be sure to double space.
- ★ Include the library's phone number as a source of further information.
- ★ Include the dates you want the PSA aired. Be sure to include both beginning and ending dates.

Sample press releases and PSAs can sometimes be found in the annual Reading Club manual. The samples in the manual will provide you with thematically based copy from which to build promotional pieces tailor-made for your library.

In all your publicity efforts it is important to weigh the time and expense required against the potential return. You want your publicity efforts to have a payoff. While a roadside marquee may be very visible, it is also very expensive to lease and may require the services of a professional graphic designer. Conversely, getting a message on the local access cable station's character generator may not be viewed by as many potential customers, but it is free and requires a minimum of time and effort. Your goal in promoting the Reading Club is to *get the word out* in the most efficient and effective way possible. Work smart as you promote the Reading Club.

How Will You Solicit the Support of Your Library Administration and Staff?

It is important to bear in mind that you are engaged in an exchange relationship with library administration and staff that is very similar to the one you have with Reading Club customers. In the case of the customers you are asking them to trade time and interest for the reading materials and activities you provide. In the case of library administration and staff you are asking for an exchange of support and good will for -- what?

That is the central question as you develop strategies to solicit support: What can a library director, branch manager, reference librarian, or circulation clerk expect in their Reading Club exchange? What value do you place on their support and what are you willing to exchange for it?

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to quickly conclude that your Reading Club efforts result in increased circulation, increased traffic (and probably noise) in the library and an overwhelming surplus of books to shelve. At best, such increases can only be viewed as mixed blessings by those who are already "working as hard as they can!" You may quickly retort that you are only doing your job and that the staff is in fact getting paid to work so they really shouldn't complain. This argument may make you feel better but it probably won't ingratiate you to the support staff.

While you know that you are indeed working hard to make the Reading Club a success, it might be useful to consider your "work" from the perspective of a support staff member. He/she sees you engaging in lots of friendly conversation. You are laughing and singing and reading stories. You are watching films. You are playing with puppets and making crafts. Children are hugging you. Parents are looking on with pleased smiles as you reward their

children's success. You are getting lots of positive feedback. You call it work, but it looks a lot like FUN!

And of course, it is fun. Sure it is work, but it is fun work. Perhaps the most valuable and appealing exchange you have to offer is letting the support staff in on the fun. Do not keep the support staff out of the Reading Club fun. Invite them in! Acknowledge and applaud the work they do that assures the success of the Reading Club and find ways to increase their participation.

Begin by providing the support staff an opportunity for input as you plan the Reading Club. They may have vivid memories of past Reading Club successes that will inspire you. They may just as likely have horror stories of previous Reading Club disasters. Listen to these, too. There is no need to repeat old mistakes. If the manager of the Circulation Department has a consistent staffing shortage on Friday afternoons, you want to know that before you decide to schedule a weekly puppet show at that time. In these pre-planning discussions sessions, however formal or informal they may be, keep in mind what you want to happen. You want the staff to know that their input is valued. You want them to feel that they are a part of the Reading Club endeavor.

As Reading Club plans are finalized, it is important to inform the support staff of your intentions. Copies of any flyers or brochures you produce to publicize Reading Club activities should be distributed to all staff members, particularly those who have any occasion to deal with potential customers. Knowing that you will not be the only one who is asked questions about the Reading Club, it is important that all public service staff have access to accurate information. If possible, take time to talk with the staff about the information supplied in printed form, giving staff a chance to hear, as well as

Keep the Staff Informed About the Reading Club

★ Give every public service staff member his/her own copy of every Reading Club flyer and brochure.

★ Post a schedule of Reading Club activities near the telephones at the Reference Desk, the Circulation Desk, and all other public service points.

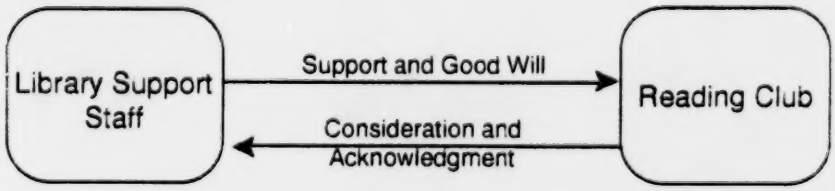
★ Talk to staff members at the beginning of the Reading Club every year. You want them to have current and accurate information, not left-over memories of how the club operated last year.

read. about the plans and programs.

As you discuss the Reading Club with support staff, before and after planning takes place, be sensitive to interests and to inclinations that may come to the surface. If you really want the staff to be a part of the Reading Club, you will have to listen carefully and intuitively. A shy but artistic shelver may not ask to help put up the bulletin board but welcome the chance if it is offered. An outgoing circulation clerk might enjoy helping distribute certificates at the closing celebration. If you tape the scripts for your puppet shows prior to performances, the sound of a different voice might be a nice change for your audience and just the right way to get the reference librarian to participate. *Be creative.* It is your responsibility to find ways for the support staff to join in the fun.

It is also your responsibility to acknowledge the many ways in which the support staff assists in the success of the Reading Club. Thank them for registering all those new library card holders, for checking out all those books, for checking them all back in and getting them all back on the shelf. Thank them for answering all those phone calls about the time of the puppet show, for patiently explaining the overdue policies to overheated customers, for smiling when they were tired but the line was still very long! Thank them and share the credit for the success. The Reading Club doesn't belong only to the children or the children's department. It belongs to everyone on the staff. And everyone deserves a pat on the back, during the club and as it concludes.

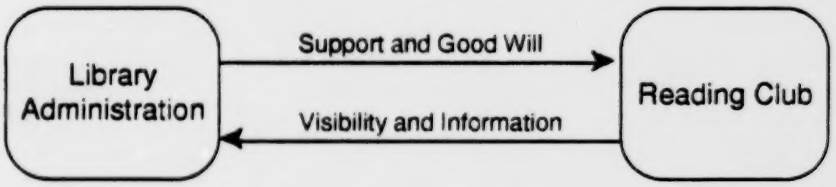
Think back now, about the Reading Club exchange. What will you offer to the library staff in exchange for their support and good will?



Most succinctly, you will offer consideration and acknowledgment. You will consider their feelings, their concerns, their input. In doing this, you offer them the chance to be a part of the fun and to enjoy an equal share of the credit for a successful endeavor.

Like the support staff, the library administration is also engaged in an exchange relationship with the Reading Club. In some cases the administration may be actively involved in the Reading Club in ways very similar to the support staff. If you are lucky enough to have a director or branch manager who wants to sit in as a guest storyteller, help pass out the cookies, or hand letter the names on all the certificates, by all means take advantage of that willingness. Make him/her an honorary Reading Club member, figure out ways to make the interactions fun and thank your lucky stars for the support!

It is more likely that your administrators will take a less active role in the Reading Club. This means that you must try harder to determine what to offer in the exchange relationship. What can you give your administrator in exchange for his/her support? What does the administration need from the Reading Club? Two things come immediately to mind. You can offer information and you can offer visibility.



Perhaps more than anything else, an administrator needs to know what is going on in the facility that he/she administers. The Reading Club is a major project/program of the library and consequently, the director/manager needs to know about it. If you have taken the time and trouble to articulate goals and objectives for the Reading Club, prepare a copy of this document for your director/manager. If you have developed a program schedule and distributed it to your potential customers, remember that your director/manager is a customer, too. If you are enjoying increased attendance at school age read-aloud sessions, tell your director/manager. Do not assume that he/she knows what is happening. It may seem obvious to you, but you are right there in the thick of it. Your director/manager cannott applaud your efforts and value your ultimate success unless you make sure to inform him/her about it!

Increased knowledge of the Reading Club can also lead to increased aware-

ness of a more subtle benefit: visibility. If the director/manger knows that you are sending out press releases, talking to school groups, publishing schedules, he/she can quickly deduce that the library is increasingly in the public consciousness. An astute administrator realizes that increased awareness can lead to increased use and/or increased support. In fact, through increased information about, and understanding of, the Reading Club your director/manager can more effectively utilize increased public awareness. When he/she speaks at the weekly Lion's Club meeting and can say specifically, this year's Reading Club has over 800 participants, the seeds of support are being planted. When he/she tells the Friends of the Library that circulation increases between 18 and 25% during the eight weeks of the Reading Club, similar seeds are being sown.

The results of these *plantings* may not be immediately known. It is unlikely that anyone will jump up with their checkbook and offer to underwrite next year's Reading Club. It is equally unlikely that anyone will rush to City Hall recommending an increase in the library budget. And certainly, it is not your intent in planning and in carrying out the Reading Club to use it as a fund-raising vehicle. It is however, important to see the larger library picture and to know that just as you are engaging in an exchange relationship with your customers and supporters, the library administration engages in similar exchanges. While the administrative exchange may have a greater complexity to its relationships, the marketing principle is the same.

How Will You Evaluate Your Reading Club and Your Marketing Efforts?

Evaluation is the last step in this year's Reading Club effort and the first step in developing next year's program. Understanding the areas of success and defining the areas where you fell short will help you plan more effectively in the future.

As you consider the topic of evaluation, think of it in both quantitative and qualitative terms and from the perspectives of both your customers and yourself (the library).

Quantitative Evaluation: Considering, measuring, reporting the outcomes of the Reading Club in numeric terms related to the quantity of events/interactions.

Qualitative Evaluation: Considering, describing, and reporting the outcomes of the Reading Club in non-numeric terms related to the quality of events/interactions.

If you are accustomed to counting how many children participate in the Reading Club, how many earn certificates, attend programs, etc., you have been engaging in quantitative evaluation from the library perspective. This is not a bad thing. In fact, it is a good place to start! The objectives you developed in the early stages of the planning process should help you in determining what to count. The State Library asks for a numerical accounting of the Reading Club that should offer you some additional help in this area. How many and what types of programs did you offer? How many and what types of publicity efforts did you undertake? Quantitative questions are not difficult to answer if you have planned for them and recorded pertinent information during the course of the Reading Club. For example, if you

want to know and report which program had the highest attendance, you only have to remember to count (and write down) the attendance figures as you go. If you want to know what program had the greatest number of *repeat* attendees, you will need to record the names of the children who came to each program. While it will take considerably more work do determine the answer to this second question, it is still a quantitative measure, because counting is the basis for your response.

Comparing the quantitative output from one year to the next and developing percentages of increase and/or decrease is another fairly standard practice and not without merit. If Reading Club participation steadily increases from year to year, that is probably a good sign! As you may recall from that basic statistics course however, there is a difference between a nice little increase and a statistically significant increase. Depending upon your expertise and personal level of math anxiety, you may or may not want to worry about this. After all, those increases, no matter how small, look good! Beware however, the numbers may not go up indefinitely. Some year you may eventually see a slight decrease that is not easy to explain. This may be the year you want to investigate statistical significance in some detail!

Qualitative evaluation may not be as well known to you as quantitative. In this instance, rather than count *how many, how often*, you will try to determine *how good, how meaningful*. Like the statistical tests of quantitative evaluation, there are sophisticated procedures that have been established for undertaking qualitative research. One of the basic tools of qualitative evaluation is a journal. As you engage children in the Reading Club process, as you present programs, read stories, and watch films keep a written record of what you think is going well and why. Similarly, analyze and annotate what could be done better. Note the responses you receive from the children who participate, their parents and caregivers, library staff members, etc.

Keeping such a journal may be a difficult routine to establish. It is hard to find time. You don't really like to write. You are busy. Customers need your help and attention. However, if you are truly interested in assessing and assuring quality, this is a habit you need to develop. Let's say that you have discovered a drop in the number of children attending your afternoon craft sessions. You (and your supervisor) may jump to the conclusion that crafts are not the place to put your energy even though you really like doing the programs. You notice from your journal entries what you perceive as a

definite increase in interest and enthusiasm among the participants as the group gets smaller. Now, you have dilemma, but you also have the basis for a more informed decision. Do you want to continue the craft sessions knowing attendance may need to be limited in order to facilitate a quality program? Even the most number conscious supervisor in the world will respond better to a "yes, but..." argument in favor of a quality program if you have some data to support your stance.

Just as meaningful as your evaluation, will be that of your Reading Club customers. Ask them how they feel about the endeavor, what they would prefer or suggest. You can make some inferences based on what programs are well attended, what books are asked for repeatedly, etc. And certainly, that will be easier than seeking out a more formal mode of evaluation. However, inferences can be risky and lead you to some erroneous conclusions.

You will want to talk informally with your customers regularly during the course of the Reading Club. Listen to what they are telling you. Jot down their comments. Ask direct questions but be mindful of their sensibilities. A child may not want to hurt your feelings with a negative response to an anxiously asked "Did you like it?" But a relaxed, "What did you think?" might allow for a wider and more candid range of response.

The close of the Reading Club is an excellent opportunity to ask for evaluative response in a more formal manner. Appendices B and C offer some sample questions and formats you might want to use as models. You should consider the suggested questions carefully. Ask questions that will give you useful information. If you do not want to know which publicity vehicle was most effective, do not ask. If you want to know more about who is responding to the survey, insert a question that will give you some means of determining that. If the name of your school age story time was *The Book-Worm Bunch* use the name as you ask children to assess that program. If you did not offer any puppet shows, do not include a space to evaluate them in your questionnaire.

The written formats shown in the Appendices will be useful only with school age children and adults. You may also want feedback from your younger Reading Club customers. Iconographic evaluation forms will assist you in

such an effort. You might develop a survey with questions such as:

When I am in the Library I feel....

The Reading Club puppet show made me feel....

This sort of survey will require some adult assistance and intervention, but it will give you some useful information and allow your younger customers to be a part of the evaluative process.

In all of your questionnaires, be aware of whether you are soliciting quantitative or qualitative data. If you are going to count and report that 85% of the respondents ranked the Reading Club as *Awesome*, that is a quantitative measure. A customer generated list of books read and enjoyed might be both quantitative and qualitative. It will be useful to give your customers a chance to respond to both types of questions. Quantitative questions are easier to formulate, easier to respond to, and easier to tabulate. Qualitative questions require more thought and effort to develop, to respond to, and to evaluate. They are however, a potentially rich source of data. One final note regarding the survey: keep it short and easy to understand. Ask what you really want to know as succinctly as possible.

After you have evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively, from the library perspective and from that of your customers, you will have lots of information. You may well be drenched in data! What do you do with all this data?

USE IT! Gather it together in some useful and attractive format and share it with the Reading Club customers, with the support staff, with the administration, with the Friends of the Library, with anyone and everyone! Write it up as a press release and send it off to the newspaper and the local television stations. This is the time to pat your customers, your co-workers, your sup-

porters and sponsors, even yourself, on the back one last time. Then, file it away for a while. Do not think about it. Go on vacation. You deserve it!

After you return from your brief respite, (while you are waiting for you sunburn to peel and putting off preparation for the Halloween puppet show) get it back out. Enjoy it, briefly, one more time and then figure out new ways to use it!

If you notice that the school closest to the library had a pretty low participation rate, go talk to the principal. Figure out a way to get the library into the mind set of that faculty and those students. Think like a marketer. What can you offer them in exchange for their interest in the library? Your interest in them? Monthly storytimes on the school campus?

If you notice that the day care center up the street was at the library all the time during the summer, go talk to the director. Figure out a way to keep the interaction going.

This evaluation is the basis of your new marketing research. You can now better assess the needs of your customers. You can more easily identify target groups. You can better understand and adjust the market mix (price, product, place, and promotion). You have the tools to make next year's Reading Club even better.

Appendices

A. A Note to the Grown-ups
Information to share with the parents, grandparents, and caregivers of the children who join the Reading Club.

B. Reading Club Report Card
Simple survey to be completed by children who participated in the Reading Club. Designed to help you find out what you did right and where you might adjust and improve, according to your primary customers.

C. Reading Club Evaluation
Simple survey to be completed by parents and other caregivers who supported the participation of their kids in the Reading Club. Designed to help you find out what you did right and where you might adjust and improve, according to your secondary customers.

D. Texas Reading Club Themes
List of Reading Club themes, 1975 through 1995.

A Note to the Grown-Ups...

Thank you for your interest in the Texas Reading Club.

The purpose of the Reading Club is to encourage reading for pleasure. Reading Club participants engage in free voluntary reading.* Which is to say that Reading Club members read because they want to. There are no books reports, no questions at the end of the chapter, no lists of vocabulary words to define. Books are chosen, not assigned. A book that is not pleasurable can be put down and another one chosen.

Research informs us that this type of free voluntary reading is an activity that highly literate people engage in all the time with amazing and positive results. Children who are free voluntary readers display improved reading comprehension, improved writing skills, and enhanced vocabularies. Their spelling and grammatical control improve as well. The positive relationship between free voluntary reading and literacy development is remarkably consistent.

Free voluntary reading should be encouraged but cannot be demanded. Children who are read aloud to are more likely to choose reading as a leisure time activity. Children read more when they are exposed to reading, when they see other people doing it. Children read more when they have access to a wide range of reading choices and when they visit the library regularly.

Your interest in the Reading Club is actually an interest in the future achievement of your child. We encourage you and your child to join the Reading Club this year. Spend some quality time reading together. It will be time well spent!

*The term free voluntary reading was coined by Stephen Krashen. The text of this note was adapted from sections of his book The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research which was published in 1993 by Libraries Unlimited.

Reading Club Report Card

You are usually the one who gets the report card --- but now its your turn to give the grades! Tell us how you felt about this year's Reading Club and help us make next year's Club even better.

Here are the grades:

A is for **A**wesome!
B is for **B**etter than expected.
C is **C**ould be better.
D is for **Definitely** needs improvement!

Circle a grade for all the activities you participated in. If you came to arts and crafts, then give it a grade -- but -- if you never came to a storytime, just skip that space.

School Age Storytime	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Arts and Crafts	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Film Showings	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Puppet Shows	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Closing Celebration	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Overall Grade for the Reading Club	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**

What was the best thing about this year's Reading Club? _____

_____

_____

How can we make next year's Reading Club better? _____

_____

_____

Name one of the best books you read (or listened to) during the Reading Club. _____

Reading Club Evaluation

Behind virtually every child who participates in the Reading Club there is a caring and concerned adult. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, day care teacher, or just a friendly neighbor, please accept our THANKS for helping the child in your care succeed in this year's Reading Club. Please take a few minutes to complete this evaluation form. Your answers will assist us as we evaluate this year's Reading Club and help us plan an even better program for next year.

★ How did you learn about the Reading Club? (Check one or more.)

_____Television/Radio
_____Through my child's school
_____At the library
_____Other _____
_____Newspaper
_____Library newsletter
_____Don't really remember

★ What Reading Club activities did your child participate in? (Check one or more.)

_____Toddler Storytime
_____School Age Storytime
_____Film Shows
_____Closing Celebration
_____Preschool Storytime
_____ Arts and Crafts
_____Puppet Shows
_____Reading Log

★ Which activities did your child enjoy the most?
If you can, identify a particular activity (dinosaur storytime or the cactus craft).

_____

★ How often did your child attend activities?

_____Once or twice during the summer
_____Once a week
_____Didn't attend programs
_____Once a month
_____More than once a week

★ Of the books your child read or listened to, which one was a special favorite?

_____

Further comments or suggestions? Jot them down on the back of this sheet. You, your child, and your ideas are all important to us! We hope to see you throughout the school year and again next summer. Until then -- Keep Reading!

Texas Reading Club
★ Themes ★

1975	Cross-Country with a Hero
1976	Movin' On...Then and Now
1977	Jungle Journey
1978	Come to Chimera
1979	In Search of Texas Treasures
1980	Sports Splash
1981	Monster Madness
1982	Space Capers
1983	Reading Rodeo
1984	Magical Mysteries
1985	Awesome Adventures
1986	Celebrate Texas
1987	Animal Antics
1988	Trailblazers, Stargazers
1989	Creature Features
1990	The Secret Code is R.E.A.D.
1991	Camp Wanna Read artwork by James Marshall
1992	Discover the New World of Reading artwork by Stephen Kellogg
1993	Lions, and Tigers, and Books...Oh My! artwork by Felicia Bond
1994	Familiar Faces, Faraway Places artwork by David Wisniewski
1995	Once Upon a Planet... artwork by Denise Fleming

47

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